

STATE OF CONNECTICUT
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES



REPRESENTATIVE JASON ROJAS
HOUSE MAJORITY LEADER

Committee of Higher Education and Employment Advancement
Public Hearing Testimony
In favor of House Bill 5346
March 10th, 2022

Chairs Williams and Lopes, Vice Chairs Anwar and Smith, Ranking Members Polletta and Cicarella, and distinguished members of the Housing Committee. Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of **H.B. 5346 AN ACT ESTABLISHING A PILOT PROGRAM TO FUND SOCIAL WORKERS IN EMERGENCY SHELTERS**

Throughout the pandemic, emergency shelters and organizations providing similar services proved vital to the state's emergency response system. Despite their essentiality, state funding of emergency shelters has not kept pace with the rising cost of living, increasing strain on this crucial part of the safety net.

Shelters save lives in providing a place of refuge, mental health/substance use services. H.B. 5346 aims to address the shortage of service providers. It is my hope that this pilot program will assess the unmet needs for on-site social worker services in emergency shelters and help enable such shelters to recruit and retain social workers to meet their needs. We know that equipping shelters with social workers can expedite services for individuals and families. Social workers can make referrals and aid individuals/families with the process of applying for temporary and long-term housing.

Many of our state's nonprofits struggled to find the resources to meet the growing demand over the past couple years. I'm glad to see the Housing Committee taking action and raising a bill to establish a pilot program to fund much needed social work services in emergency shelters.

For these reasons, I urge favorable consideration in moving this bill forward. Thank you,

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "J-Rojas".

Jason Rojas